

# 2005

## Montana Statewide Independent Living Council Annual Report to the Governor

### Montana Statewide Independent Living Council Mission Statement:

To make independent living a reality for Montanans with disabilities by promoting and practicing a philosophy of consumer control, development of peer relationships and peer role models, self-determination, self-help, equal access, and advocacy in order to maximize independence, integration, and full inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream Montana.

### Independent Living

Individuals with disabilities have the desire to live independently just like their friends, family, and neighbors. The Independent Living program provides them with the services needed to achieve their desired way of life.

In Montana, the Independent Living program provides individuals with a wide array of services including referrals to appropriate agencies for assistance, resource development, basic skills training, employment, and benefits planning, housing, education assistance and planning, assistance with accessibility issues, and personal care assistance. These services are delivered through the four centers for independent living located in Billings, Black Eagle (Great Falls), Missoula, and Helena, which collaborate with the Montana Statewide Independent Living Council and the Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

The funding for these services is through a state and federal matching mechanism. The state dollars are currently being funded through the general fund. This funding is the primary source of funds for two of the four Montana centers for independent living. Independent living funding is significant because it serves individuals with all types of disabilities and all ages.

### Statistics

#### Number of People Served in 2005

Total = 1,460

#### Served by Disability

Category	
Cognitive Disability	= 167
Mental/Emotional Disability	= 153
Physical Disability	= 685
Hearing Impairment	= 41
Visual Impairment	= 123
Multiple Disabilities	= 134
Other Disability	= 157

#### Most Frequent Services

- Information and Referral
- Self-directed Personal Assistance Services
- Transportation
- Advocacy

#### Most Frequent Community Change Achievements

- Mobility/Transportation
- Education
- Community Integration
- Collaboration

## Statewide Independent Living Council Achievements

In 2005, the Montana Statewide Independent Living Council provided significant support in the following activities:

- Creation of the Disabilities Action Alliance of Montana (DAAM).
- The redesign of the Governor's Advisory Council on Disabilities.
- Continued support for the activities of the Montana Transportation Partnership.
- Legislative activities that increased funding for independent living services, provided funding for the Montana Youth Leadership Forum, and made regulation changes that will increase transportation options for persons with disabilities.
- The development and coordination of the National Governor's Association initiative to improve outcomes of young adults with disabilities.

## Issues of Importance For 2006 Security of Independent Living Funding

- State funding initiated in the last legislature for Independent Living and the Montana Youth Leadership Forum need to be continued in order to sustain the present level of services.

## Implementation of Olmstead

- The Governor's Advisory Council on Disabilities has been redesigned to address Olmstead issues. Recommendations by the Council will provide important guidance to ensure Montanans with disabilities have supports necessary for living and participating in their community.
- The state has received a grant to explore implementation of a Medicaid buy-in option. Medicaid buy-in is an important option for persons with severe disabilities being able to maintain Medicaid after obtaining employment. Options developed by this project should be given serious consideration for implementation.

## Increased Transportation

- Changes in the recent federal transportation legislation require greater community coordination for planning the use of public transportation resources. Persons with disabilities need to be included in these coordination activities.

## Success Stories

### Montana Independent Living Project - Helena

MILP approached an individual with a head injury to participate in a recent independent living symposium. He had not been gainfully employed for over 10 years. After the symposium, he expressed an interest in becoming a peer advocate in MILP's recreation program. He was also assisted in receiving vocational services. He now works half time as a night auditor for a local motel. Also, he has been a peer advocate for MILP for nearly a year.

### North Central Independent Living Services - Great Falls

An individual who is undergoing dialysis secondary to renal failure needed assistance with obtaining necessary services. NCILS successfully assisted her in a Social Security appeal, food stamps, Medicare Part D, securing funding for roof repairs on her house, and referred her to Vocational Rehabilitation. She went to Spokane in August 2005 for an evaluation to receive a kidney from a donor. Recently, she was notified that there is a donor match for her. She will be getting her new kidney soon. She and her mother are grateful for the expertise within our Independent Living Centers.

### Summit Independent Living - Missoula

Summit assisted a consumer with severe sleep apnea, high blood pressure, obesity, psoriasis, and arthritis in his hips and knees. Due to lack of sleep, he had suffered many near death accidents resulting in extensive injuries to his face, body, and jaw. He also had difficulty breathing and speaking. Summit assisted him to obtain Social Security benefits, obtain necessary medical benefits, and to get into an exercise program. The consumer also attended Living Well with Disability classes and assertiveness classes. The consumer's attitude is much more positive and he has lost 80 pounds. The public health nurse believes there have been significant improvements in his quality of life and sense of well being.

### Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow - Billings

A consumer with agoraphobia who attended LIFTT's Living Well with Disability classes gained a more positive perspective of her disability. The classes also assisted her in dealing with other emotional issues and in learning independent living skills. She reports that she is now optimistic and sees success at the end of the tunnel.

**SILC Members:** Representative Carol Lambert, Chair - Broadus; Donna Scott, Vice-Chair - Billings; Bob Liston, Secretary - Missoula; Carol Ann LaRocque - Great Falls; Tom Tripp - Butte; John Pipe - Wolf Point; Senator Gerald Pease - Lodge Grass; June Hermanson - Helena; Evelyn Oats - Box Elder; Evelyn Pool - Kalispell; Nickie Fee - Great Falls; Nicola Smith - Great Falls; Bob Maffit - Helena;

**SILC Staff Person:** Mike Hermanson, Program Manager, Vocational Rehabilitation Services.